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United for Quality Care

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Norwich
District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Faysal Prodhon and I am a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) living in Norwich. I come before you today to ask that you invest the funding required to pay PCAs a livable wage and provide us quality benefits.

While I have only been officially working as a PCA for six months I have provided this type of care for my father for over ten years. Caring for my father is something I am honored to do. I love helping him to be more active and to live a more fulfilled life. While it is nice to be paid to care for him, I would do it either way because it is my responsibility. My sister is a PCA as well, it is in my family's culture to care for one another.

However, just because we love our father and love caring for him does not mean that it does not come with its challenges. I had to quit my job in order to care for my father and so now my primary source of income is through my work as a PCA. I would maybe get a second job but I also am going to school because I need to make more money than what I make as a PCA. I want a family of my own one day and so I must find a career that will allow me to afford this.

Working as a PCA opened my eyes to the struggles of living in poverty, one event away from a crisis. Last year my dad got sick with Covid and I could not work. I did the Covid test that Saturday, it was negative but the following Monday I got sick. I did not do another test, I just felt it was Covid. I went to DOL and they gave me problems getting paid from unemployment. They gave me \$107.00 for the week. I was making \$500.00 a week as a PCA. Then they sent me a paper to fill out. The lady from DOL told me I did not have to fill it out if I did not want to. Then I got a letter saying I did not show up for the hearing. I don't remember getting a hearing date. Now they say I owe the money back, which is difficult as I don't make very much to begin with. I filed an appeal and am waiting for a response.

This story is merely an example of how unstable life can be as a PCA. Your employment is tied to your consumer and without livable wages, paid time off, and other benefits you become very vulnerable. You begin to feel as though one accident or negative life event is all it will take to send me spiraling into a financial crisis. This is unacceptable for any worker let alone a professional caregiver such as a PCA.

We need to do better as a state and that is why I have come before you today. Please properly fund home care services, so PCAs can earn livable wages and receive the benefits we deserve.

Thank you for your time.